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First Committee

8th Meeting
Friday, 16 October 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier ..... (Belgium)

In the absence of the Chairman, Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakhstan), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 63 to 79 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Diatta (Niger) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of the Niger is pleased to see Mr. Mernier presiding over the work of the First Committee. We wish to take this opportunity to extend our warmest congratulations to him. I assure him of my delegation's wholehearted readiness to support him in his duties. We also extend congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

While all mankind may aspire to genuine peace, it remains true nonetheless that the tragic events that occur throughout our planet continually demonstrate the need for general and complete disarmament in the areas of nuclear and conventional weapons alike.

The Niger, in accordance with its noble ideals of international peace and security as set down in the United Nations Charter, has set as its primary objective, within the context of its foreign policy, the establishment of relations of good-neighbourliness and peaceful coexistence with all neighbouring countries, as well as all peace- and justice-loving States throughout the world. Similarly, my country has always striven for genuine disarmament, an indispensable factor of the achievement of the international peace and security to which we all aspire.

In this respect, I am pleased to note that my country adheres to several international instruments, among which I would mention the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Thus, the Niger solemnly appeals to those countries that have not yet done so to adhere to these important instruments in order to give them the requisite universality.

With respect to anti-personnel landmines, the Niger was pleased by the conclusion in Ottawa of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which my country signed on 4 December 1997 and is in the well-advanced process of ratifying.

How can we maintain international peace and security if we are not vigilant to the proliferation of weapons of all types, in particular those that are used most in armed conflicts throughout the world? The accumulation and transfer of light weapons and small arms perpetuate many conflicts, with serious repercussions for international peace and security. This situation affects us all and forcefully requires us to take vigorous action to implement the measures that already exist in this area.

That is why Niger the, at a very early stage, joined with the United Nations and some neighbouring countries to take global action against the scourge of illicit arms trafficking. That is also why my country has regularly contributed to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

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In the domestic sphere, in addition to its legislation on the import and possession of firearms, the Niger established in 1994 a national Commission to collect and control illicit weapons. The Commission, whose purpose is to curb the lack of security caused by the circulation and proliferation of small arms in the Niger, has already achieved convincing results, as observed in March 1995 by the United Nations Advisory Mission on curbing illicit circulation of small arms in the Saharo-Sahelian subregion. For example, 3,411 weapons were collected in 1994 and 168 in 1995, all of which have been stored pending their destruction in the near future, an important event to which all the heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the Niger will be invited, along with the representatives of international organizations and all other interested persons.

The Commission achieved these encouraging results thanks in part to agreements concluded with the armed rebel fronts, following mediation by friendly countries, in April 1995 and more recently in August 1998. In other words, the main locus of the use of these weapons has disappeared in the Niger. But the fact that the armed elements were demobilized, quartered and disarmed does not mean that everything is settled. Residual insecurity remains and disturbs the calm of peace-loving citizens. That is why further considerable efforts must be made regarding the scope of the phenomenon and the lack of resources for fighting this scourge. This justifies my country's request to the United Nations for financing to assist our national Commission to collect and control illicit weapons. Indeed, assistance from the United Nations and the international community at large is more necessary than ever to bring about lasting security in the Niger.

The regional dimension of conventional and nuclear disarmament is undoubtedly an essential element in establishing a climate of lasting peace throughout the world. Here, the Niger remains convinced that the activities of the United Nations regional centres for disarmament in Asia, Africa and Latin America must be strengthened. In that regard, my country is very pleased that the work of the Lomé centre, whose importance for Africa is beyond doubt, will continue. But the centre will be able play its full role only with adequate material and financial resources.

Along the same lines, I should recall that the promotion and increase of nuclear-weapon-free zones is conducive to the establishment of genuine disarmament, both regionally and internationally. Clearly, this is not easy to achieve, which is why the support of the entire international community is necessary.

The Niger joins in supporting the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, because additional progress is indispensable in the areas of the control of weapons of mass destruction and the establishment of effective norms for conventional weapons.

In conclusion, on behalf of the delegation of the Niger, I thank the Secretary-General for his courageous reform programme, which has included the transformation of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs into a Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation.

Mr. Valencia Rodríguez (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation is pleased, Madam, to see you in the Chair at this meeting. We warmly congratulate Ambassador Mernier of Belgium on his well deserved election to the chairmanship; the delegation of Ecuador pledges its firm cooperation in the work of the Committee. Our congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau. We wish also to thank Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe for the intelligent and dynamic manner in which he conducted the work of the Committee last session.

Ecuador's position on major issues of disarmament and international security is reflected in the final document of the Durban Summit of non-aligned countries. I wish nonetheless to speak of a number of matters that Ecuador views as particularly relevant.

Within the goal of general and complete disarmament, nuclear disarmament continues to have top priority for all countries, irrespective of their social, economic or political status. Here, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the focus of our efforts to achieve that goal, which is why my delegation once again appeals to those States that have not yet done so to accede to that instrument, which must be universal. We welcome the recent accession by Brazil, which strengthens Latin America's firm support of the NPT. We are also following with particular interest the work of the Preparatory Committee for the year-2000 Review Conference and are confident that the results of the conference will meet the hopes of the international community.

We also hail the signing of the Political Declaration at the Ushuaia summit, by which the members of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the associated States of Chile and Bolivia have formed a zone of peace, free of weapons of mass destruction.

Consistent with its traditional policies, Ecuador has condemned the nuclear tests by India and by Pakistan, which unquestionably constitute a threat to international peace and security, not only in that region but throughout the world. We also think it necessary for those two countries as quickly as possible begin a positive dialogue with a view to creating a climate of confidence that will help ease the tension caused by these tests.

Ecuador was pleased at the possible creation within the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, to consider negotiations on a programme leading gradually to the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a defined time-frame through a universal, binding multilateral instrument to that end.

We view the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as particularly important, and we are pleased to see the number of signatories growing — to 149 as of 20 June 1998, 14 of which have ratified the Treaty. We urgently appeal to the 44 States whose ratification is needed for the Treaty to enter into force to act quickly to shoulder the special responsibility they have assumed.

As we did at the fifty-second session, we stress the importance of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, which remains valid. We believe that all States, in conformity with the Court's Opinion, must pursue multilateral negotiations on a convention on nuclear weapons prohibiting the development, manufacture, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, leading to their ultimate elimination.

Ecuador considers it essential for nuclear-weapon States to provide sufficient, unconditional and legally binding guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States on the use or threat of use of these weapons. Here, the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to create an ad hoc committee on negative security guarantees is of particular importance.

We believe also that greater support should be accorded the negotiations on a treaty banning fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear devices. We welcome the creation of a special committee in the Disarmament Commission to prepare the ground for the treaty, whose goal must be nuclear disarmament, not just non-proliferation.

Ecuador, as a party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, believes that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region represents a positive step towards worldwide nuclear disarmament. In this context, it is crucial that nuclear-weapon States give unconditional guarantees regarding the use or threat of the use of such weapons to all States in the nuclear-weapon-free zone in question.

We welcome the joint declaration of 9 June 1998 by the Ministers of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden regarding a new agenda on nuclear disarmament whose ultimate objective would be to create a world free from these weapons and which would not be limited to the question of non-proliferation. We believe that compliance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will ultimately lead to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

We find it positive that the Chemical Weapons Convention, which entered into force on 29 April 1997, has acquired a universal character and thereby moved closer to the complete and effective implementation of all its provisions, and we appeal to those States that have not yet done so to ratify it. Priority must also be given to the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention. We look forward to a speedy conclusion to the ongoing negotiations in the Ad Hoc group on a legally binding protocol to establish a verification regime.

Many States, especially developing countries, are concerned about the illicit transfer and use of small arms and light weapons. Disarmament measures and the end of certain armed conflicts have, in certain parts of the world, resulted in the stockpiling and proliferation of these weapons, which are then distributed to other countries that are experiencing armed conflicts or instability. Terrorists and drug traffickers are the biggest consumers of those devices. About 100 million weapons of this kind are in uncontrolled circulation, representing an even greater threat, perhaps, than the manufacturing of new weapons. This is one of the most lucrative aspects of the death business.

To put an end to the problems relating to the illicit transfer and circulation of unlawful weapons, it is important that Governments assume greater responsibility regarding the export or import, use, stockpiling and in particular the distribution of these weapons. It must be recognized that some Governments are adopting national measures that may improve the situation in certain conflict regions. In this respect, we welcome the adoption in 1996 by the Disarmament Commission of guidelines relating to the international transfer of weapons. The American continent

made a significant contribution to this process with the adoption of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Illegal Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials.

The conventional arms trade is also a source of constant concern in Ecuador. We must urge those States that possess the largest arsenals of these weapons to reduce significantly their production and stockpiles of conventional weapons. We believe that all States have the sovereign right to provide for their genuine defence needs but feel that the excessive accumulation of these weapons contributes to unchecked arms races, with the attendant dangers. This also creates major imbalances between countries of the same region, which always seems to work to the detriment of the smaller countries.

As regards the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, Ecuador, like many other developing countries, would like to express its pleasure that Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons entered into force on 30 July 1998. We welcome also the fact that Protocol II on landmines, booby traps and other devices entered into force on 3 December 1998.

In this respect, Ecuador fully supports the Ottawa Convention, whose speedy entry into force we welcome. We hope that it will soon become universal in nature. That instrument, whose ratification is being considered by our Congress, represents a strengthening and refining of the basic principles of international humanitarian law. It is of fundamental importance that there be international support for projects aimed at the deactivation of anti-personnel landmines. We believe that the international fund created for this purpose must receive significant contributions, especially from those countries that have produced or exported these weapons.

In this connection, I should like to point out that the Presidents of Ecuador and Peru, on 28 September 1998, asked the President of Brazil, as Coordinator of the Guarantor Countries of the Rio de Janeiro Protocol, to lend his valuable cooperation to a plan to clear mines from an area that had been the site of a conflict between Ecuador and Peru in 1995. The results of this request were positive, and concrete plans leading to mine clearance have been devised. This is a clear demonstration of the will of those two countries to implement the principles that underlie the Ottawa Convention.

Efforts relating to disarmament in all its aspects must be adequately supported by confidence- and security-building measures, which in turn means that a special effort should be made by all countries. In order to ensure that these measures are effective, it is crucial that positive negotiations be undertaken aimed at seeking solutions to existing problems and conflicts in certain regions and countries. We cannot expect progress in the field of disarmament if the conflicts that still divide countries are not moving towards satisfactory solutions. It is key, then, that the vital interests of the parties to conflicts be respected.

My delegation would like to reiterate its support for the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We believe that this will be an excellent opportunity to carry out a detailed review of all disarmament-related matters in order to decide on future action. The agenda for this special session must include items on conventional disarmament, the effective reduction of conventional forces and weapons, the relationship between disarmament and development, and confidence-building measures among States. We believe that the participation of all States is necessary, since this is an issue of the greatest importance for the maintenance of peace throughout the world.

Ecuador has expressed particular interest in joining the Conference on Disarmament. On this occasion, we would like to express our appreciation to the representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Erwin Hofer, for the efforts he made in the respective working group to facilitate the admission of the group of five countries: Ireland, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Tunisia and Ecuador. This was not achieved because of a lack of consensus. We believe that those five countries must coordinate their positions and efforts with the aim of pursuing the necessary consultations before the end of the current year so that the way can be cleared for the fulfilment of that aspiration at the first meeting of the Conference in January 1999.

Mr. Laptsenak (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Mernier on his election to his important post. I should also like to make my statement in Russian, in accordance with the many General Assembly resolutions on the equal treatment of the official languages.

The global interdependencies that make the world an indivisible entity highlight the problem of international security, peace and disarmament as the key prerequisites in ensuring solutions to a wide range of other major issues.

The epoch-making impact of the forthcoming turn of the century prompts us to make an in-depth analysis of the trends that have emerged and a comprehensive forecast of their eventual evolution. The only valid approach is to take due account of both the lessons learned from the past and the multidimensional environment in which we live, interact and meet the challenges that abound in today's troubled world.

The United Nations plays one of the key roles in the global disarmament process. We welcome the re-establishment of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, whose first actions have received general approval. Many new initiatives have come about within the Organization to strengthen international peace and security, and we hope that their number will increase.

It is satisfying to note the long list of treaties and agreements concluded in recent years, providing clear proof that the gradual process of disarmament has become steady and progressive at the end of the twentieth century. The majority of Member States today have adopted policies whose focus is on measures to strengthen the non-proliferation regime for all types of weapons of mass destruction, to further reduce nuclear arsenals, to eliminate the stockpiles of chemical weapons and prohibit their production and to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the Biological Weapon Convention, thus implementing the provisions of the principal treaties and agreements in the field of disarmament.

One of the major objectives for all of us is to ensure a better and more secure world for all nations for the present and the future. Every time a conflict erupts or a crisis becomes imminent in some part of the world, the supply of arms and external interference — and sometimes foreign intervention — aggravate the situation. A booming trade in small arms, in particular, has been contributing to a world-wide culture of violence and to indiscriminate killing. Unfortunately, military intervention is in danger of becoming a frequent factor, to the detriment of existing positive political, diplomatic and economic approaches.

Belarus has traditionally advocated the peaceful resolution of crises wherever they occur, in the bilateral sphere and at the international level, with regard to global, regional or local issues. As for regional conflicts, I should like to draw the attention of the Committee to the latest statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus about the intent to resolve the crisis in Kosovo by force through a regional agreement. We believe that missiles are excellent in technological terms but truly negative politically.

It is clear that in almost all cases, economic growth is a factor that can help prevent conflicts. That should therefore be the way to deal with crises and to help countries. It is no coincidence that in these circumstances many countries recently have questioned the need to introduce outside intervention involving force to help settle crises, and that the issue of responsibility for the consequences is often raised.

For some time, Belarus has been putting forward the proposal to establish an international fund to assist countries whose economies have experienced disproportionately large burdens as a result of measures taken to liquidate conventional weapons. That idea has recently been echoed in the initiatives taken by a number of donor countries aimed at achieving disarmament. The idea has been put forward in many recent statements, and perhaps it will lead to the establishment of a global demilitarization fund. At this stage, it is sufficient to recall the fund that has been created to assist in demining and similar initiatives.

Belarus submits national data to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms on a regular basis and calls upon all countries to comply with their obligations to submit such information to the Register. More effective international control is required over the export of small arms, in particular to regions of conflict. The unrestricted export of such weapons to those regions leads to increased military confrontation and destabilizes the social and economic situation.

We are participants in the steadily evolving post-confrontation concept of security. That is a multidimensional process, encompassing all countries and regions. The key question is how we perceive the ways and means to ensure stability and security for ourselves and for our neighbours near and far. In today's interrelated world, with the almost unlimited possibilities of modern technology, we are all, in a sense, neighbours. Are we to rely on mutual deterrents or on mutual respect for each other's concerns and interests?

Every State has the inalienable and legitimate right to choose for itself those means of ensuring its national security that it perceives to be the most appropriate, including the right to enter into defence alliances. At the same time, while choosing those means, it is crucial not to lose sight of the self-evident axiom upon which rests the entire process of global stability and trust: the

inadmissibility of one State bolstering its own security at the expense of others. The principle of not establishing new spheres of influence and dividing lines between States or their alliances should underlie relations among States.

Security is indivisible and can be relied upon only when the spirit of partnership — rather than political diktat, economic sanctions or the relapse to bloc politics and widening their geographic reach — becomes the sole basis for constructing international relations. Any student of European history will no doubt understand our concerns regarding the destabilizing effects of a potential expansion of the geographical boundaries of regional agreements.

Any new practical measure in arms control brings about new security realities and may positively influence the very approach to it. Constructing a reliable system of international security that would equally accommodate the concerns of all States very clearly requires agreed-upon international procedures, both with respect to verification of existing agreements and controlling developing situations with regard to new types of weapons of mass destruction to prevent their being produced and employed.

Together with its political and military components, the all-embracing security system of the twenty-first century should include economic, social, ecological and other dimensions. This theme has resounded with confidence in recent years in many international forums. Belarus, for its part, has been active in making practical contributions to all the components of that process in recent years with regard to both conventional and nuclear weapons. We have unequivocally demonstrated our will and readiness to play a pioneering role on the European continent in this respect.

Belarus has radically reduced its armaments, armed forces and military arsenals, strictly abiding by its international commitments in the framework of treaties and agreements. Our activities in this field cover a wide range of issues that are of priority concern to all Member States, from with small arms to nuclear weapons. Belarus is a member of the International Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, as you know, and our activities extend to the prevention of the development and production of new types of weapons of weapons of mass destruction, a matter on which Belarus has traditionally advocated, on a regular basis in the three-year cycle, the adoption of a resolution by the General Assembly.

We have sought to foster the reform process and to rationalize and to adapt to present conditions all components of the existing international disarmament machinery. Belarus chaired the Disarmament Commission in 1998, and we did not want to make that a "backwards year".

As is well known, we banned from our territory tactical, then strategic, nuclear missiles. In view of the qualitatively new situation that has de facto emerged in Central and Eastern Europe, Belarus proposed establishing a nuclear-weapon-free space in the centre of Europe. Building upon the existing realities, the Republic of Belarus has been urging and continue to urge all States to support that initiative. We are convinced that its implementation would enhance security and mutual trust on the continent, foster geographical non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and be a major step forward in consolidating peace and stability, both in Europe and globally.

Europe, from whose territory nuclear weapons spread over the whole planet, has no moral right not to follow suit as other regions have done in making nuclear-weapon-free zones a reality. We now have an historic chance to build a new framework for a global security system. One of the main features of our initiative is the inclusion of the proposed space in the general European security structure. Through its practical actions to that end, Belarus seeks for Central and Eastern Europe an atmosphere cleansed, by the end of the cold war, of suspicions, opposing military blocs and the arms race, an atmosphere that would strengthen mutual understanding and trust among European nations, both today and in the century to come. We appreciate the ever-growing number of States that have been supportive of our endeavours.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones positively complements the global regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) by prohibiting the stationing of nuclear weapons on the territories of other States included in those zones and circumscribing the geographical proliferation of nuclear weapons. Incidentally, article VII of the NPT — to which most Member States are party — recognizes the right of any group of States to conclude regional agreements to preclude the presence of nuclear weapons on their territories.

In the light of the latest developments related to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the issue of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones acquires particular prominence. A vivid confirmation of this was the adoption of six resolutions on related measures by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. In parallel with existing nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa, Latin

America and Asia, regional initiatives have appeared whose potential is as yet far from clear. The response from the countries immediately concerned has so far been at best lukewarm. Given this fact, we are fully aware of how long and meticulously we must still work and we intend to continue along that path.

Given the circumstances, the issue of arms control is of particular importance, as it is the main instrument for ensuring peace and stability in all continents. One of the major issues — on whose development much will depend and which will determine the further development of the international security system in the next century — is the future of the European continent, which is very important to us.

There are still too many unresolved issues with regard to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We still have to do a great deal in order to move ahead in limiting conventional weapons and preventing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in various areas of the world.

The international community was seriously concerned over the development of events in South Asia last year. We therefore add our voice in support of the appeal to all countries to accede to the NPT and the CTBT.

Belarus supports the efforts of the international community to attain an agreed-upon approach to an international legally binding convention on guarantees for the non-nuclear States. We note the positive impact of the Security Council resolution. Unilateral statements by the nuclear States to the States parties to the NPT are of uncontestable importance in this regard.

Our country attaches great importance to international instruments such as the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We strictly observe a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines and neither produce or supply that type of weapon.

The problem of achieving complementarity in global disarmament efforts is having an increasing impact and requires the adaptation of previously concluded disarmament treaties and agreements, in particular the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, as well as the provision of support to countries whose economies are disproportionately burdened by the work involved in the elimination of conventional weapons. In this regard, we believe there has been a dramatic increase in the importance of the environmental aspects of disarmament. As is well known, we have long supported the inclusion of premeditated acts that do serious harm to the environment in the proposed code of crimes against peace and security.

The Belarus delegation supports the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). We certainly recognize the full complexity of the issues related to the decision to hold that important session. Since that important event will undoubtedly affect the global political climate, consensus on all the well-known issues is of course required.

Progress on this issue was achieved at the last substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. In our view, the members came quite close to consensus. Unfortunately, there was not enough time to fully formalize this consensus. We hope that this question will be settled in the near future. Further, in establishing the agenda of SSOD IV, we should strike a balance between the issues involving conventional weapons and those involving nuclear weapons and should concentrate on international security problems, confidence-building measures and strengthening the role of the United Nations in the disarmament field as a whole.

Unfortunately, it cannot be said that there is agreement among Member States on the issues related to the convening of SSOD IV. Although a Working Group of the Disarmament Commission has spent three years on this subject, a mutually acceptable decision has not been reached. The most pressing issues are nuclear disarmament, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zone zones, regional disarmament problems, measures for strengthening mutual trust and security, transparency in armaments and other issues. Our delegation is ready to continue consideration of these issues at the forthcoming 1999 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

The delegation of the Republic of Belarus also notes its readiness to cooperate closely and constructively with the Chairman and with all other delegations so that the First Committee can prepare and adopt important decisions in the field of security and disarmament.

Mr. Than (Myanmar): On behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, I have the pleasure to make the joint ASEAN statement on arms control and disarmament issues.

"The ASEAN member States recognize the fact that the positive conditions prevailing in the post-cold-

war era offer better opportunities as well as greater challenges for international efforts for arms control and disarmament. We are of the view that all States should take advantage of these positive conditions to produce concrete results in the field of arms control and disarmament.

"Reaffirming our commitment to the goal of general and complete disarmament, the ASEAN member States call upon all States, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to undertake and bring to a conclusion negotiations on effective measures of nuclear disarmament, leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We reiterate our call for the commencement of multilateral negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a phased programme of progressive and balanced deep reductions of nuclear weapons with a view to the total elimination of these weapons, within a specified time framework, through a nuclear-weapons convention. In this connection, we urge the Conference on Disarmament to establish, as the highest priority, an ad hoc committee to commence negotiations in 1999 on such a phased programme of nuclear disarmament.

"Furthermore, we call for the convening of an international conference at an early date with the objective of arriving at an agreement on such a phased programme of nuclear disarmament leading to the total elimination of all nuclear weapons, prohibiting the development, testing, production, acquisition, stockpiling, loan, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons and providing for their destruction. In this context, we express our support for resolution 52/38 L, entitled 'Nuclear disarmament', submitted by Myanmar and other sponsors at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, and the follow-up draft resolution submitted to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

"We reaffirm our conviction that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States in the regions concerned in various parts of the world constitutes an effective measure of preventing the geographic proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament. Bearing this in mind, we express our support for and encourage efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world.

"In this context, we reiterate the importance of the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in enhancing peace, security and stability in the region. The Treaty entered into force on 27 March 1997. We welcome and note with satisfaction the ongoing consultations between the States parties to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty and the nuclear-weapon States. We express our desire and hope that the nuclear-weapon States will sign and ratify the protocol at the earliest possible date. To this end, we urge the nuclear-weapon States to show their firm resolve and maximum flexibility to work together with us in a spirit of amity and cooperation to find solutions to the outstanding issues in the shortest possible time.

"We stress the importance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996, and appreciate its contribution to the cause of nuclear arms control and disarmament as well as to the development of international law. In particular, we appreciate the ruling of the Court that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be generally contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and its conclusion that there exists an obligation for all States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. In this context, we express our support for resolution 52/38 O, entitled 'Advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*', submitted by Malaysia and other sponsors at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, and the follow-up draft resolution submitted to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

"We recognize the importance of the work of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum dealing with disarmament. We fully support the expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament, particularly the applications of Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand for Conference on Disarmament membership."

I should like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the First Committee.

Mr. Makubuya (Uganda): The Uganda delegation wishes to congratulate Mr. Mernier and other members of the Bureau on their election to guide the work of the First Committee at the fifty-third session of the General

Assembly. I assure them of the full cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of their responsibilities.

The Charter of the United Nations states that one of the principal purposes of the United Nations is the maintenance of international peace and security. Disarmament is, in this regard, crucial to the maintenance of international peace and security. It is for this reason that my delegation wishes to welcome the re-establishment of the Department for Disarmament Affairs under the able leadership of Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala.

It is particularly important today that disarmament take a leading role in the work of the United Nations. The spectre of a nuclear arms race and its attendant dangers is once again an issue of major international concern, particularly in light of the recent nuclear tests in South Asia. As the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uganda said in his statement to the General Assembly during the general debate of its fifty-third plenary session on 1 October 1998:

> "The philosophy of dependence on nuclear weapons for security is, in a creeping and disturbing fashion, becoming universal. This situation is creating new dangers for the very survival of mankind." (*A/53/PV.23*, p.20)

The Uganda delegation therefore calls upon all States Members of the United Nations to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as a first step towards the goal of the total elimination of all nuclear weapons, so that humankind can live without the fear of self-destruction. In the same vein, we call for the total elimination of other weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical and biological weapons.

The number of armed conflicts, particularly in the developing countries, is on the increase, leading to large numbers of deaths and disabilities and the loss of property. The majority of these new conflicts are intraterritorial, localized and of low intensity, making them especially difficult to control or even bring to the attention of the international community. These conflicts are kept going largely because of the availability of small arms, which are today responsible for most of the lives lost in armed conflicts. The level of proliferation of small arms is alarming and, unless concrete measures are adopted to regulate the production and transfer of small arms, our dreams of a world of peaceful coexistence will not be realized.

My delegation calls upon the international community to help control the movement of small arms and particularly to enforce arms embargoes on countries in which conflicts of the kind just mentioned occur. It is in this regard that my delegation welcomed the opening for signature in Ottawa last December of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Anti-personnel landmines are technologically easy to produce and cheap, and yet the destruction they cause, particularly to civilian non-combatants, is horrifying. The cost of clearing anti-personnel landmines, the destruction to human life and their impact on the livelihood of millions of people by rendering farm land unusable justify the ban. Uganda has signed the Ottawa Treaty and its ratification by Parliament is in the final stages.

In August this year, East Africa witnessed the savagery of terrorism when huge bombs exploded simultaneously at the American embassies in the capitals of our sister republics of Kenya and Tanzania. Uganda, too, suffered terrorist attacks in which three civilian public buses were bombed, leading to the loss of many innocent lives. Terrorism knows no borders and must, like the drug problem, be treated as a global problem. My delegation therefore calls for an international conference to exhaustively discuss the problem of terrorism and, in particular, to reach agreement on sanctions against countries which train, harbour and sponsor terrorists. It is through collective action that we can overcome this growing problem.

The Indian Ocean has, over the centuries, been central to the lives of people in three continents and indeed, since the fifteenth century, to the rest of the world. The Indian Ocean has been central to the trade, culture and movement of peoples in the regions which its waters touch. It is therefore important that, as this Ocean continues to play an important role in the way of life of humankind, it should be free from any confrontation that may endanger peace in the region. It is against this background that the Uganda delegation supports the call for the Indian Ocean to be declared a zone of peace. This will enhance the global economy and promote international peace and security. We call upon all countries to support our desire to declare the Indian Ocean a zone of peace.

Earlier this week, Uganda participated in an important International Conference in Brussels on Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development, with particular reference to small arms and child soldiers. The Conference was a concerted effort by some Members of the United

Nations to respond to the fact that, despite the end of the cold war, the toll of human and material destruction in war-torn and conflict-prone areas is spiralling at such an alarming rate that development resources are increasingly being diverted to emergency relief and rehabilitation operations. In addition, there is an urgent need to address the problems of the proliferation and abuse of small arms and light weapons, which have become the major weapons of internal and inter-State conflicts. The Uganda delegation would like to urge the General Assembly to give due consideration at this session to the Brussels Call for Action, which was adopted by the Conference on Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development.

The international community's concerns about armed conflicts and insecurity were indeed one of the main reasons for the establishment of the United Nations. Over the years, we have expended a great deal of energy and resources in conflict resolution, post-conflict reconstruction and humanitarian aid. As we move towards the twenty-first century, it is imperative that greater resources, both human and material, be made available in efforts to prevent conflicts. The Uganda delegation therefore welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (S/1998/318) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, in which he stressed that the prevention of war is today a matter of the defence of humanity. In the same vein, my delegation welcomed the establishment of the Organization of African Unity Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

It is the wish of my delegation that the United Nations should develop a proactive mechanism that is able to prevent disagreements over ideas and interests from becoming causes of armed conflict. This would require an active peace policy on the part of Member States and international organizations that is eclectic and that addresses the fundamental causes of conflict, many of which lie in the scarcity of resources arising from a lack of social and economic development.

Mr. Al-Ghanim (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I congratulate Ambassador Mernier on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are confident that his wisdom and wide experience will help us achieve success in our work. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau and wish them all success.

The rapid changes on the international scene, the interdependent interests of States and the effects of these elements testify to the need to strengthen cooperation and solidarity in international relations. International security is indivisible. The course of peace is the only course that will lead the international community to a safe harbour. In the light of today's conditions and challenges, the end of the cold war showed clearly that world cooperation and solidarity can preclude actions that pose a threat to international peace and security; and disarmament figures prominently in international cooperation.

The proliferation of conventional weapons and the accelerating pace at which States vie to build up their arsenals give cause for concern. Here, international cooperation is needed to take steps to limit this phenomenon and to build confidence among nations, in the service of international peace and security. Perhaps the most important of such steps is support for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, so that it can have the effect of reducing military expenditures, and so that States may divert the resultant savings to the development process in developing countries, especially in the light of present deteriorating economic conditions.

My delegation takes special interest in the matter of anti-personnel landmines, the effects of which are not limited to armies in wartime, but rather persist long after that stage. This poses a threat to the peace and security of peoples all over the world. The position of Kuwait, as enunciated in the General Assembly by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, is the following:

> "In the area of disarmament, we welcome the progress made thus far with regard to the Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.
>
> "When we in Kuwait talk about landmines, we have in our minds the bitter memory of the destructive impact of the millions of mines planted throughout Kuwait by the invading Iraqi forces. Those mines claimed the lives of hundreds of innocent children, women and elderly people. It took painstaking efforts, in which many States participated, to remove those mines. Kuwait had to expend great efforts and vast sums on the clearance operations.

"We therefore call on the international community to pursue its efforts to eliminate anti-personnel mines. Kuwait also encourages the movement towards curbing the arms race and developing controls and rules that contribute to tension reduction in all volatile and conflict-ridden regions, especially the Middle East, South Asia and the Indian subcontinent." (*A/53/PV.16, p. 17*)

The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was a major step towards a priority disarmament goal of the international community. This reaffirms the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted on 11 May 1995 at the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT. As a signatory of the CTBT, Kuwait calls upon other States speedily to sign that Treaty and not to engage in any activities that run counter to the letter or the spirit of the Treaty.

All our countries share the common goal of turning the region of the Middle East into a nuclear-weapon-free zone. But the way to that goal is blocked by Israel's refusal to respond to the wishes of the countries of the region and of the rest of the international community. Israel, moreover, refuses to accede to the NPT and to subject its nuclear installations to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. My delegation calls on the international community to pressure Israel to respond to the wishes of the international community and help create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which would spare the region from imminent danger.

My delegation does not confine itself to calling for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East; it calls for the removal of all weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East, including chemical and biological weapons, and for the prohibition of the manufacture and export of fissile materials. This would ease tension in that vital region, which has long been subjected to many conflicts and threats, the most recent of which was Iraq's wanton invasion of Kuwait. Iraq continues to possess chemical and biological weapons, which it has used against its own people in northern Iraq. As the Secretary-General said in this Committee on 12 October 1998,

"We know too that chemical weapons have been used extensively, notably against Iran and against civilians in northern Iraq in 1988. There too, 10 years later, the people of Halabja are still suffering the effects in the form of debilitating disease, birth deformities and aborted pregnancies." (*A/C.1/53/PV.3*)

Those who use these weapons against their own people will not hesitate to use them against their neighbours.

The Committee established under Security Council resolution 687 (1991) has affirmed that United Nations efforts are important for the security of the Gulf region and has welcomed Security Council resolution 1194 (1998) calling on Iraq to rescind its decision to suspend cooperation with the Special Commission and with the IAEA.

My delegation wishes to call on all States to accede to all disarmament treaties in order to free the world from these terrible weapons. Machinery should also be set up to monitor the import, transfer and manufacture of conventional weapons, whose flow is seemingly endless. Nor can I fail to mention that declarations and the signature of treaties are not enough in and of themselves; good faith is also required.

Mr. Boang (Botswana): Botswana has been a party to the Biological Weapons Convention and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) for a considerable period of time now. Of late, we have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, which came into force for us on 30 September 1998. We are currently on course to finalize the process of signing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). That notwithstanding, Botswana has already offered its well-equipped geological station for participation in the Treaty's monitoring system. This, in all fairness, is demonstrative of our commitment to the prohibition and elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

However, we are acutely aware of the need for further progress in this area, particularly as regards nuclear weapons. We have rightfully argued, and will continue to do so, that nuclear-weapon States have to show sufficient political will and commit themselves to the elimination of nuclear weapons. We are aware also that the elimination of nuclear weapons will not happen overnight. Such awareness, though, is often rendered mute by the nuclear-weapon States' attachment to the fundamental nature of those weapons to their defence doctrines. As has been stated earlier by other colleagues, possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent is inimical to the cause of their elimination.

Everyone, including nuclear-weapon States, knows what has to be done for there to be progress in nuclear disarmament. We believe that concrete progress on bilateral measures between the Russian Federation and the United States will go a long way towards steering us towards the right path in pursuit of Treaty objectives as far as the NPT is concerned. Furthermore, the delegation of Botswana supports calls for the de-alerting and de-targeting of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon States. The end of the cold war has indeed offered ample opportunity to realize tangible progress in this regard, and we should not allow it to pass us by.

We welcome also the decisions of the Conference on Disarmament to establish ad hoc working groups on security assurances and the fissile material cut-off treaty. Non-nuclear-weapon States, particularly those party to the NPT, have contributed in no small measure not only to non-proliferation but to nuclear disarmament and as such deserve better than being perceived as potential "rogue States", to be kept in check with the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

After the conclusion of the CTBT, it is necessary to speedily commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. My delegation would like to urge members of the Conference on Disarmament to take the mandate from the General Assembly with the seriousness it deserves. Whenever we delegate the responsibility for negotiations to the Conference, we do so with the hope of receiving tangible results. It is still our hope that negotiations on an fissile material cut-off treaty will fully take into account the issue of existing stocks of fissile material. That treaty should fully prohibit the use of such stocks for further weapons development.

While fully cognizant of the various steps which could enhance momentum towards nuclear disarmament, my delegation will continue to support all efforts meant to bring us to the ultimate goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons. We will be ready, wherever possible, to co-sponsor draft resolutions on this subject.

Like other delegations, we share the expressed concern on the question of small arms. We were among the first to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Botswana welcomes the fortieth instrument of ratification of the Convention and is in the process of finalizing its own instrument of ratification. We would like to urge the international community to continue its support to the affected countries in mine clearance and rehabilitation of victims and economies. Furthermore, we would like to urge other United Nations Member States to seriously consider joining the overwhelming majority in banning the use of anti-personnel mines.

My delegation also welcomes and supports the offer by the sister Republic of Mozambique, a founding member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to hold the first meeting of States parties to the landmines Convention next year.

As regards the seemingly endless flow of light weapons, particularly to developing countries and areas afflicted by conflict, my delegation would like to point out another angle to this problem. It has become abundantly clear that the flow of light weapons, particularly to developing countries, is not only a result of States' demand for these devices for self-defence, but rather also a product of blinded conscience whose only concern is positive returns on this deadly commercial venture. International arms merchants, with acute and informed awareness of their countries' supposed ignorance, are indeed cause for concern. In some instances, international arms merchants have become the best salesmen any country could dream of in terms of marketing its products. This frightening and horrendous use of skill has even become the saving grace of some arms industries, accomplishing what the State could not. Even more perplexing is the fact that while States' apparatus appears able fully to record transactions later on, at the same time it is seemingly unable to recommend effective measures to stem the tide.

As for the Republic of Botswana, we will continue contributing to stemming the illicit flow of small arms by restricting the possession and use of weapons of war to those institutions that are charged with maintaining our national security. Anyone in our country with adequate curiosity or the desire to develop a career related to such devices is free to do so, but within the confines of our national security institutions.

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr. Mernier on his election to steer the affairs of its Committee. I have no doubt that his rich experience and resourcefulness will prove beneficial to the Committee's work and help bring our deliberations to a fruitful conclusion. My delegation assures him of its full cooperation.

As was noted by my President in his recent statement in plenary during the general debate, the end of the cold

war has unleashed new threats to global and regional peace. Intra-State conflicts rooted in ethnic, racial and religious intolerance pose a threat to the security of many States and regions. Regrettably, these are compounded by the spectre of weapons of mass destruction and by the proliferation of conventional weapons. Article 24 of the Charter imposes on the Security Council primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, while Article 1 calls for effective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace. But can we hope for peace in a world replete with arms? Can we hope for peace while the nuclear Powers adamantly cling to doctrines of nuclear deterrence and maintain their hold on their nuclear arsenals?

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), to which most of our countries adhere, were clearly intended to prevent the proliferation or wider dissemination of nuclear weapons, as a first step towards the cessation of the arms race. They are not, therefore, an end in themselves, but a means to achieve an end, which is nuclear disarmament. It is therefore regrettable that not much progress has been made towards the goal of achieving general, unconditional and complete disarmament.

Our current experience has demonstrated that the threshold States, parties and non-parties to the NPT and CTBT alike, will not continue indefinitely to abide by the treaties, or to respect the consensus reached, while the nuclear "haves" continue to defy the calls of the international community to deliver on their commitments. The recent nuclear tests by two States Members of this Organization underscore the need for urgent measures to promote general and complete disarmament. We therefore call on the nuclear-weapon States once more to take initiatives or cooperate in the appropriate multilateral forums with regard to the institution of a programme of action for nuclear disarmament. In this connection, we renew our call for the early convening of an international conference on disarmament. If we were to fail in this, our earnest quest for nuclear non-proliferation would remain an illusory objective, to the detriment of global peace and security.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention in April 1997 was enthusiastically welcomed by us all. We have all further pursued the laudable objective of strengthening the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction with credible verification measures that would make it more effective. If we are able to work together to prohibit the production and use of these weapons of mass destruction, we can do as much with nuclear weapons.

The excessive accumulation of conventional weapons also poses a serious threat to humankind. We all acknowledge the fact that conventional weapons are the ones most widely used in conflicts worldwide. A sizeable portion of all transfers of small arms and light weapons is illicit and is increasingly linked to other transnational criminal activities. They threaten security, exacerbate violence and human suffering and pose problems that hamper peace-building efforts after conflicts cease. Given the tremendous harm to lives and properties, it is a welcome development that the international community is now paying increasing attention to the search for ways to deal with them, while recognizing the legitimate requirements of sovereign States for self-defence. We endorse the guidelines for international arms transfers concluded in the Disarmament Commission in 1996, which should serve as a code for all States in arms transfers to ensure transparency.

My delegation also supports the recommendations of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade, as reflected in resolution 52/38 J. In this connection, we welcome the proposal by Switzerland to host such a conference. We also welcome the initiative of the Oslo meeting on small arms, held on 13 and 14 July 1998, which sought to galvanize moves for an international agenda on small arms and light weapons and identify the elements of a common understanding. We encourage more efforts at global, regional, subregional and national levels to find practical solutions to the menace of small arms. In this regard, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has taken the initiative in preparing a moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of small arms. We commend ECOWAS for that.

We welcome the adoption last year of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Ghana was among the large number of countries which signed the Convention in Ottawa last December, and it is in the process of ratifying it. We hope that, in the not-too-distant future, conditions will permit its universal adoption so as to enable us to rid our planet of these inhumane weapons, which continue to kill and maim innocent civilians long after the conflicts in which they are laid have ended.

In conclusion, I wish to express my delegation's wholehearted endorsement of the Secretary-General's statement, issued in press release GA/9445 of 21 September 1998, on the need for us to rediscover the connection between peace and economic development. We can achieve global peace and security only if the needs of all, especially the poorest, are catered for. And this we can do if we spend on human development the resources that are spent on arms of all types, nuclear or conventional. That is our greatest insurance for durable peace.

Mr. Olusanmokun (Nigeria): My delegation would like to take this opportunity to convey to Mr. Mernier our warmest congratulations on his unanimous election as Chairman of this Committee during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We trust that under his leadership the work of the Committee will be steered to a successful conclusion. He can count on our support for the attainment of that goal. Our tribute also goes to the other members of the Bureau.

Regrettably, the end of the cold war has not brought the relief and the peace dividends expected. Conflicts stemming from ethnic, religious and cultural factors have swept through many parts of the world, consuming precious lives and property. There is therefore an urgent need for the international community to address the global security environment so that mankind can face squarely the formidable task of sustainable economic development.

Indeed, the most crucial issues facing the First Committee once again touch upon nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Recent developments in South Asia have brought into bold relief the compelling need to seriously embark on a credible, phased, time-bound programme for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It is unfortunate that the South Asia development came upon the heels of the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). My Government calls upon the countries involved to abide by the measures stipulated in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998). The international community should exercise more vigilance with a view to averting any further transfers of nuclear-weapon-related materials, equipment and technology to States. Nigeria, as a matter of policy, is opposed to nuclear-test explosions and is committed to the speedy attainment of a nuclear-free world.

It will be recalled that at the NPT Review and Extension Conference, held in New York in 1995, the States parties, both nuclear and non-nuclear, made some solemn commitments, *inter alia*: the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate aim of eliminating those weapons, and to consider taking further steps to assure non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, which could take the form of an internationally and legally binding agreement.

It would seem, regrettably, that some nuclear-weapon States have not lived up to these obligations. For instance, some nuclear-weapon States persist in their opposition to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament.

My Government is delighted by the decision of the Conference on Disarmament taken in August this year to begin negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. It is our hope that this significant step in the multilateral nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agenda, following the CTBT, will be carried through to its logical conclusion. The commencement of negotiations early next year will signify the determination of the international community to press towards the goal of nuclear disarmament and its commitment to the outcomes of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

Among the many benefits that a fissile material cut-off treaty is expected to produce is that all nuclear facilities capable of producing fissile materials for the production of nuclear weapons will be brought under legally binding international nuclear safeguards. By including both the nuclear- weapon States — as defined by the NPT — and non-NPT States, the perceived imbalance of rights and obligations between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States will be resolved. It will also bring about a security environment that will be conducive to the dismantling of nuclear arsenals and to the subsequent elimination of nuclear weapons by creating greater transparency and building confidence with regard to the capabilities and intentions of countries in possession of fissile material production facilities.

The legitimate demand of the non-nuclear-weapon States for a multilaterally negotiated agreement against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons has been outstanding since 1968, when it was made during the negotiations on the NPT. My Government is pleased by the re-establishment in the Conference on Disarmament this year of the Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons. The

Committee, ably steered by Ambassador Antonio de Icaza of Mexico, has recorded some good work. These efforts should be intensified and reinforced in the Conference on Disarmament, the NPT review conferences and preparatory committees and other appropriate forums.

While arms control and disarmament have generally addressed nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms, there is no doubt that small arms, and particularly anti-personnel landmines, have done much in recent times to damage human life and disrupt the orderly social and economic development of the affected countries. Even though it could not participate in the Ottawa process, Nigeria, as a country that upholds the basic principles of international humanitarian law, welcomes the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We reiterate our support for the objectives of that Convention.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a non-proliferation measure has become more or less universally accepted. There are currently four such zones created by legal instruments, namely, the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba. We envisage that a nuclear-weapon-free zone will become a reality in the Middle East, as well as in South Asia, considering the efforts being deployed towards that goal.

The scope of the existing zones is such that almost the entire southern hemisphere is covered. This fact probably inspired the 1996 initiative calling for cooperation among parties and signatories to the above treaties and for consolidation of the nuclear-weapon-free status of that region and adjacent areas. As a signatory to the Pelindaba Treaty, Nigeria shares the objectives of a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the success of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). We consider SSOD IV the appropriate forum not only for reviewing achievements made so far, but also for laying down the objectives and agenda to be pursued in the disarmament arena.

The Acting Chairperson: We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this afternoon.

I now call on the representative of Iraq, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Al-Anbuge (Iraq) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Iraq has warned the international community and the United Nations many times over, through documented means, not to involve the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and its inspection teams in espionage and intelligence activities. Such activities are totally irrelevant to the implementation of Security Council resolutions. Rather, they serve hostile aims of Iraq's enemies.

The Scott Ritter scandal has once again confirmed beyond any doubt the truth of what we have warned against. It has also confirmed that the machinery of the Special Commission has been used in espionage activities against Iraq with a view to jeopardizing its security and sovereignty and keeping records of disarmament open indefinitely. The purpose of this has been to prolong the siege in the interest of the political goals of the United States of America and Israel.

We were therefore not surprised to hear the representative of Kuwait state that the efforts of the Special Commission are the cornerstone of the security and stability of his State.

The Acting Chairperson: I now call on the representative of Ukraine, who would like to make an announcement.

Mr. Shevchenko (Ukraine): I would like to inform the Committee that today the Parliament of Ukraine ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, with 285 votes in favour. Thus, Ukraine became the one hundred and twentieth State party to the Convention.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.